

BEM U.S.A. Day
Ambassador Lewis Lukens
Bordeaux School of Management, Dakar
January 29, 2014

U.S. Engagement in Senegal

(As prepared)

Director and CEO of BEM,
Professors and faculty of BEM,
Dear Students,
Colleagues, counterparts, and members of the press,

Thank you so much for inviting me here to speak with you today, and on behalf of our Embassy and our country, a special thank you for organizing the first-ever USA Day at BEM! My personal congratulations to our friend El Hadj Thierno Gueye, whom I know was instrumental in putting this day together.

This occasion gives me the opportunity to talk with you about the engagement of the United States in Senegal: what our relationship with you means to us, and why we are working so hard to strengthen it every day.

I start these remarks to you reflecting on not only a new year, but on my past two and a half years in Senegal as U.S. Ambassador, and on what our two nations have accomplished together. In 2013 alone we had visits by both of our Presidents to the other's country. In March, President Macky Sall paid a visit to President Barack Obama in the White House's Oval Office. And just three months later, President Obama, along with First Lady Michelle Obama and First Daughters Malia and Sasha, came to Senegal as the first country in their three-nation tour of Africa – the first country on the first such tour President Obama paid to this important continent. It was an honor for our Embassy to work with Senegalese officials in making sure the visit was a success. The leaders spoke of many things over those visits – including our long list of commonalities. We both share a longstanding, deep, and unwavering respect for human rights and dignity; religious diversity and tolerance; and strong democratic principles. Both of our nations strive continually for increased economic prosperity. We are peoples who are often outspoken, but we are thinkers and innovators; we are dreamers and business people; and we strive to make the world a better place.

As we look toward the future, it is clear that Africa is more important than ever to the security and prosperity of the international community, and to the United States in particular. The U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa, launched in 2012 by President Obama, is based on four pillars, and I'd like to address each of them, as I see how they relate to Senegal, in these remarks.

The first pillar is to strengthen democratic institutions. On the continent, Senegal is widely recognized as a leader in terms of its democratic political culture, essential in keeping a country stable and strong. This culture was exhibited most recently on the world stage by your 2012

presidential elections and the peaceful and orderly transfer of power that followed. When that peaceful transfer of power happened for fourth time in this young nation's history, not only did African countries look on with admiration but it seemed like the whole world was watching. Many other countries fall into instability or even chaos, precisely because they don't have the strong democratic institutions, processes, and civil society that Senegal has had not just since its independence in 1960 but even long before that. In my observations, I believe this may be Senegal's strongest and most important trait, and we are so grateful for the example you provide to this region and this continent. Africa in fact needs many more "Senegals".

The second pillar is to spur economic growth, trade, and investment. Supporting African nations on economic development was one of the major themes of President Obama's visit because he, and we, realize, how crucial economic development is to everything this continent wants to achieve. We work with Senegal on your economic development principally through our two principal development agencies, the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, or MCC. USAID has been working in Senegal for over 50 years and funds longer-term projects in partnership with non-profit organizations, to improve principally health, education, and food security. MCC is a short-term, high-impact, \$540 million "compact" that concentrates on infrastructure – roads, bridges, and irrigation systems – in the north and south of the country in a plan designed and run by the government of Senegal. Both agencies' work is tied to improving the economic development of this country, including opening it up for more trade and investment. On encouraging trade and investment, however, to speak frankly, Senegal needs to do more, especially in order to attract international partners. As a friend of Senegal's, I see how much potential this nation has, especially to attract more tourists, and more businesses that are looking for stability and high-quality workers on the continent. Your relative proximity to the United States and Europe is an enormous asset. Your mild weather, safe surroundings, and friendly and bright people make living and visiting here a pleasure. And yet there is much more to be done. We were disappointed to see Senegal fall in the World Bank's famous Doing Business report. As we work on attracting U.S. business to Senegal, we are told of the great challenges of doing business here. That is decidedly not the way of the 21st century or the future Africa wants to carve out for itself. Just last month, President Macky Sall and Foreign Minister Mankeur Ndiaye called over 70 Senegalese Ambassadors, Consuls, and Economic Council Directors together for a conference in Dakar, the first of its kind since 2005. The theme of the conference was economic diplomacy, and the messages were clear: Senegal's economy needs to move forward and its diplomatic corps has an important role in making that happen. As part of that theme, we hope that more is done to pave the way for tourism and investment to flourish here.

The third pillar is to advance peace and security. On this pillar, Senegal is already playing a large role. The international community, including the United States, is so grateful for the contributions of Senegal's armed forces in international and regional peacekeeping missions. 2013 was a difficult year for Senegalese peacekeepers – in December alone, Senegal lost five of its own, in both Sudan and in the Central African Republic. They did not die in vain, however; perhaps there is no more noble cause than sacrificing oneself in the mission of achieving global peace. As the continent may face increased security challenges, including right here in Senegal's backyard, Senegal's role in instilling peace on the continent – by example, and by its security forces' leadership -- will become only more important in the near future.

I also want to mention that on the homefront, Senegal has made remarkable progress in calming the tension in the Casamance. For nearly two years, violence in the Casamance region has been significantly declining. The government, rebel groups, and people living in the Casamance now appear determined to achieve lasting peace that would place the conflict where it belongs -- into pages in the history books.

The fourth and final pillar in the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa is to promote opportunity and development. Senegalese often say that this country is poor in minerals and natural resources but especially strong in its human resources, and I believe that to be true. Nowhere is it more true than among Senegalese youth, many of you here today. As my former boss Hillary Clinton said, while here in Dakar as U.S. Secretary of State in August 2012, “We believe in the young people of Senegal and the young people of Africa. And we believe that talent is universal, but opportunity is not.”

The Obama Administration wants to create more opportunity for the people, and especially the youth, of Africa. This is why President Obama is so committed to the Young African Leadership Initiative, or YALI. And for those of you students out there, or any young innovative leaders under the age of 35 who have ideas and speak some English, I truly hope that you applied for YALI 2014. The United States government is sending 500 sub-Saharan Africans for a 6-week fellowship at a prestigious U.S. university, and a 1-week Washington, DC summit, including a meeting with President Obama. Some of the YALI Fellows will stay on for internships. YALI is a program that is intended to continue for years to come, expanding to 1,000 African youth a year. We believe in this continent, and we believe in the power of youth and African innovation to move Africa forward.

In closing, and looking out into the year before us, I look forward to my final months in Senegal and what our Embassy can achieve with the government and people here. I hope that in the future I can return to this country and see a prosperous nation whose economic achievements match its political ones. That I could see a Senegal that USAID had left because it was no longer needed. A Senegal that is working progressively with American and other international partners, especially with *other African countries*, on trade and investment. A Senegal that had achieved all that its people asked of it.

Thank you for your attention today, and thank you for all that you have done to make your country great. The world is a stronger place because of Senegal's role in it. And I cannot wait to see what you will do for Senegal in the future.